

REMARKS

Prior to entry of this amendment, claims 20-31 are currently pending in the subject application. Claim 29 is withdrawn from consideration. Claim 20 is the sole independent claim. In this amendment, claim 20 has been amended to incorporate limitations included in claim 21, claim 27 has been amended in light of the amendment to claim 20, and claim 21 has been cancelled. Entry of the foregoing amendments and reconsideration in light of the following remarks is respectfully requested

Applicants request, in the next Office action, that the Examiner indicate the acceptability of the drawings filed on February 9, 2004.

A. Introduction

In the outstanding Office action:

- 1) claims 20 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,531,668 to Ma ("the Ma reference"); and
- 2) claims 21-23, 25-28 and 30-31 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

B. Asserted Anticipation Rejection of Claims 20 and 24

Claims 20 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by the Ma reference. Although applicants do not concede that a successful *prima facie* case of anticipation with respect to claims 20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) has been established, in order to expedite prosecution, claim 20 has been amended to include limitations of claim 21, and claim 21 has been cancelled. As a result, claim 20, as amended, is now in condition for allowance. Furthermore, claim 24 depends from and includes all limitations of claim 20, and is likewise in condition for allowance on at least the same basis as claim 20. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that this

rejection of claims 20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) be withdrawn so that all pending claims may proceed to allowance. Furthermore, applicants respectfully request that claim 29 be rejoined, as claim 29 depends from and includes all limitations of claim 20, and is likewise in condition for allowance on at least the same basis as claim 20.

C. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 21-23, 25-28 and 30-31. As noted above, all pending claims are now in a condition for allowance.

D. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are allowable for reasons including, but not limited to, those set forth above, and that the patentability of the claims does not depend solely on the particular claim elements discussed above.

If the Examiner believes that additional discussions or information might advance the prosecution of the instant application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below to expedite resolution of any outstanding issues.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration of this application is earnestly solicited, and an early and favorable further action upon all the claims is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: January 30, 2008

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PETITION and
DEPOSIT ACCOUNT CHARGE AUTHORIZATION

This document and any concurrently filed papers are believed to be timely. Should any extension of the term be required, applicant hereby petitions the Director for such extension and requests that any applicable petition fee be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1645.

If fee payment is enclosed, this amount is believed to be correct. However, the Director is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1645.

Any additional fee(s) necessary to effect the proper and timely filing of the accompanying-papers may also be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1645.